

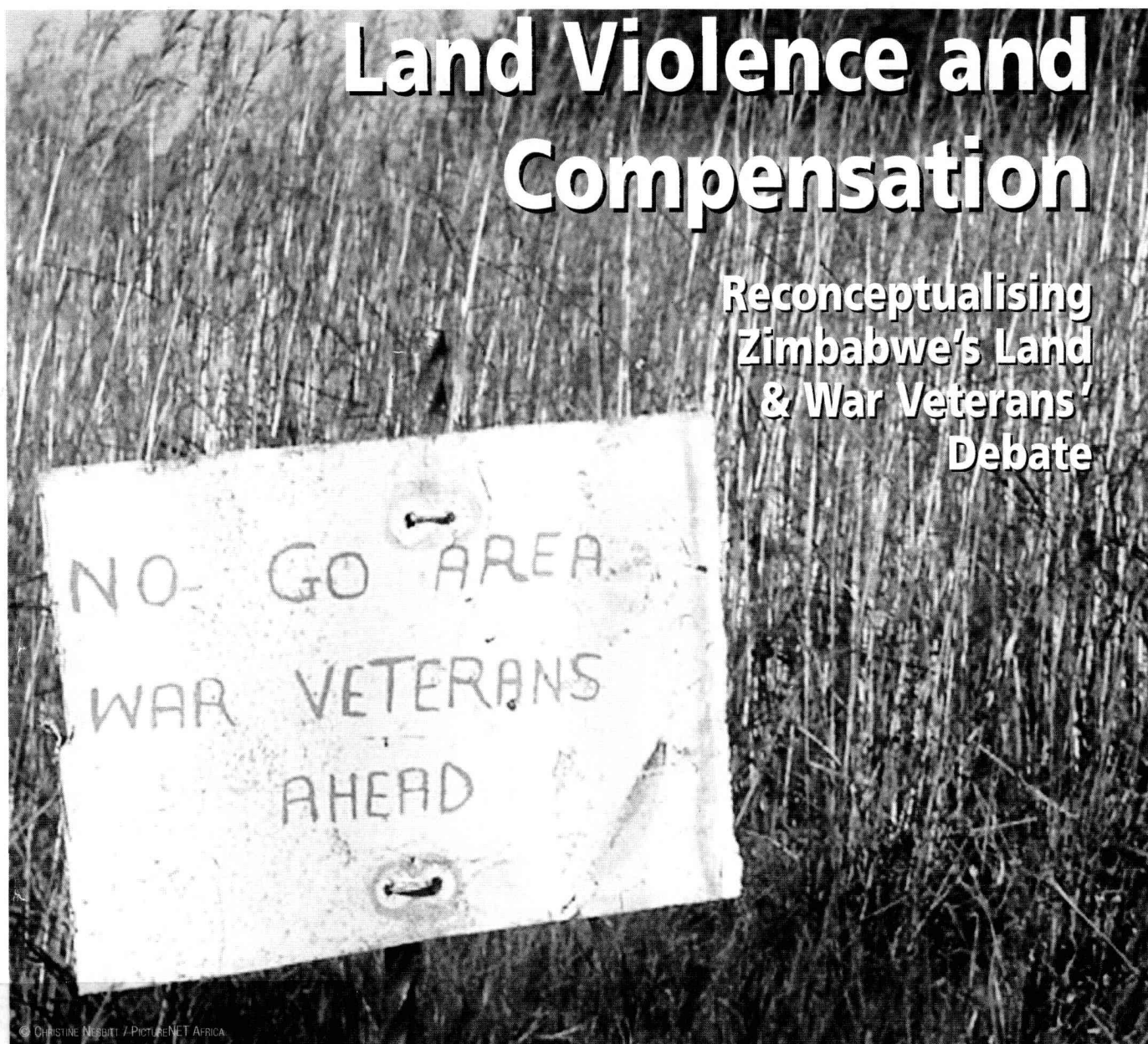
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CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY AND POLITICAL CONFLICT

Occasional paper

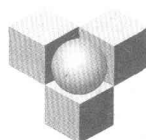
Land Violence and Compensation

Reconceptualising
Zimbabwe's Land
& War Veterans'
Debate



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The term 'track two' refers to informal, unofficial interaction outside the formal governmental power structure, providing the means for historically conflicting groups to improve communication and gain a better understanding of each other's point of view. In so doing, it reduces anger, fear or tension, and facilitates the resolution of substantive conflicts.

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ISSN 1019-7435

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Land Violence and Compensation

Reconceptualising Zimbabwe's Land & War Veterans' Debate

Tapera Knox Chitiyo



This work was carried out with the aid of a grant from the International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, Canada. It forms part of a number of collected volumes on Peacebuilding and Demilitarisation in Southern Africa, edited by Peter Batchelor and Kees Kingma, which will be published by the Bonn International Center for Conversion and the Centre for Conflict Resolution during 2000. Prior permission of the author, the Bonn International Center for Conversion and the Centre for Conflict Resolution is required to reproduce this article in print or electronic format.

INSIDE TRACK

**"In Zimbabwe's land crisis
the primary causes —
land allocation, land utilisation,
demography, race, poverty
and war — are also its consequences"**

Currently, Zimbabwe is facing a land crisis that is threatening the state's very stability. Decades of misapplied state interventions in agrarian socio-economics are now being replaced by grassroots and often anarchic land solutions. Recent farm invasions by war veterans and landless peasants have seen the destruction of property, and violence with injurious and fatal effects both to farmers and farm-workers.

Knox Chitiyo looks at the various social and historical factors that have contributed to Zimbabwe's land crisis — primarily the history of resistance (linked to land) against the previous settler state and the issue of war veterans. The flawed agrarian policies imposed by colonial governments produced tensions over agro-environmental issues between white and black farmers. The degradation of land by drought and other human factors in the two decades since Zimbabwe's independence precipitated a situation of national socio-economic decline.

Issues of land resettlement, allocation and utilisation have until recently, often been overlooked, with the current explosive consequences brought to the fore by the militancy of war veterans.

Chitiyo offers an insightful overview of this fraught history of land struggle, tracing the use of "silent" violence — threats and use of force against livestock and the environment — and "loud" violence — threats and use of violence against people and their property. Hopefully, this paper will provide new perspectives to the very complex issues regarding Zimbabwe's land crisis.

Roshila Nair
Editor

Introduction

In the past decade, Zimbabwe has been simultaneously confronted by two enormous and inter-related socio-economic challenges: the land question and the issue of war veterans. The land question is both a cause and consequence of Zimbabwe's struggle for liberation, the Second Chimurenga (1966 – 1980). However, it had its origins in the initial anti-colonial struggle, the First Chimurenga (1896 – 1897).

In essence, this paper examines two themes: first, how successive colonial governments inherited and imposed fundamentally flawed agrarian policies, and how African peasants adapted to and resisted these policies. The threat or actual use of violence against people or the environment has been used both to press for and refuse land claims by both the state (even in the post-independence period) and the peasants. Although this paper does not purport to be an expert analysis of the land crisis (a number of specialist works on this subject are available¹), examination of the land issue is nevertheless essential.

Establishing consensus on the true nature of the land crisis has been difficult; efforts to reach agreement on a solution have posed even more problems.² Zimbabwe's land crisis is one in which the primary causes (land allocation, land utilisation, demography, race, poverty and war) are also its consequences. This paper investigates this history of cause and effect, examining violence as both cause and consequence of the land crisis. I use the term "silent" violence to refer to the threatened or actual use of force against livestock and/or the environment,³ and the term "loud violence" to refer to the use, or threatened use, of violence against people and their property.

The second major theme of this paper is the link (until recently, often overlooked, with explosive consequences) between the land crisis and the war veterans' situation in Zimbabwe. This link is both explicit and implicit. Many impoverished peasants are demobilised war veterans who have failed in various agrarian business ventures. Moreover, the peasant class and the war veterans have been the present government's most powerful voting constituencies. Neither can be ignored, and government has had to find ways to neutralise or accommodate them. In addition, compensation has been an issue common to both groups. During the Second Chimurenga, both peasants and present-day war veterans (who were guerrillas or refugees during the war) were traumatised by the Rhodesian Security Forces (RSF), various guerrilla factions and other private armies. After the war, the grassroots soldiers and peasants, who had borne the brunt of the suffering, received little recompense, while the ruling elite enriched its members. Both the peasant farmers and the veterans felt that the government had failed them, and they insisted on land and/or financial compensation as the price for allowing the government to remain in power.

This paper intends to demonstrate two points. The first is that "silent" violence will remain a problem for the foreseeable future. Impoverished, alienated and landless peasants have traditionally opposed state intervention



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List of Abbreviations

BSAC	British South Africa Company
BSAP	British South Africa Police
CA	Communal Areas
CFA	Commercial Farming Areas
CCJP	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
CFU	Commercial Farmers' Union
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
GMB	Grain Marketing Board
LAA	Land Apportionment Act
NLHA	Native Land Husbandry Act
NRA	Natural Resources Act
RhAF	Rhodesian Air Force
RSF	Rhodesian Security Forces
TTL	Tribal Trust Lands
TTLB	Tribal Trust Lands Bill
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army
ZNA	Zimbabwe National Army
ZWVA	Zimbabwe War Veteran Association



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through “silent” violence, a tradition that continues. The state, in spite of its rhetorical posturing, has not eliminated the root causes of agrarian conflict: poverty and landlessness. So far, the government has tinkered with, rather than solved the land problem. If agro-environmental security is an important element of agrarian peace-building, then the state has not succeeded in establishing such security.⁴

Secondly, although the state has faltered in dealing with “silent” violence, it is arguable that until recently, Zimbabwe was an example of successful suppression of “loud” violence. Zimbabwe has successfully fostered *operational* demilitarisation and *internal* peace-building. The creation of the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA) is one example. An examination of the land and war veterans’ crises shows that the state defused these potentially lethal crises via a combination of persuasion, coercion, financial compensation and rhetoric. Until 1999, it seemed to be following a “two-track” method of tolerating “silent” violence, while dealing with “loud” violence when this was perceived to be a threat to state security and survival.

**In Zimbabwe's land crisis
the primary causes
(land allocation, land utilisation,
demography, race, poverty
and war) are also its
consequences**

While the state successfully neutralised “loud” agrarian violence prior to 1998, the new millennium has shown the extent and limits of state power. Zimbabwe’s perilous economic situation and the defeat suffered by the ruling party in the National Referendum of February 2000, have plunged the nation deeper into turmoil. As the government increasingly sloughs off its inclusionary/reconciliatory approach and adopts the militant “radical chic” persona of the liberation group it was twenty years ago, the situation has become increasingly polarised. The ruling party’s current “gangster chic”

rhetoric plays to populist sentiments, but at national expense.

The state has pushed to extremes Zimbabwe’s historical tradition of imposing short-term racial and political solutions on genuine agrarian problems. The forcible occupation of over 800 white commercial farms (at the time of writing) by groups of “war veterans” (many of whom are clearly unemployed youths, some who were not even born at the time of the war of liberation) is a case in point. This militancy has politically expedient benefits for the government, but the cost to the nation as whole is increasingly unsustainable.

A ZANU-PF flag hangs on a farm gate. The farm was invaded in April 2000.



LAND AND VIOLENCE IN ZIMBABWE 1890 – 1979

1890 – 1929: Land and Racial/Political Expediency

In 1890, the Pioneer column arrived in the land they were to call Rhodesia. They numbered 196 Pioneers and 500 police. At this time, there were approximately 700 000 Africans, mainly Shona and Ndebele speakers, in the territory (Rolin, 1978). The Pioneers had come to the country in the belief that the land contained vast deposits of gold. There was hope that Rhodesia would turn out to be another Witwatersrand (McGhee, 1978).

It soon became clear that Rhodesia was no Eldorado. The British South African Company (BSAC), which had instigated the trek and was desperate for tangible results, was pressured by the would-be miners to compensate them with large grants of land that the company had no real authority to give. By 1893 the BSAC was already settling Pioneers on 1 284 hectare “farms” (at the time, they were merely large tracts of land) with no obligation to actually use the land. The sole obligation was the annual payment of £1 “quit rent” per farm.⁵ The Pioneer farmers were followed by the BSAP (police), who were also allocated farms. They

in turn were followed by civilians, who were given grants of 2 500 hectares under the Victoria agreement.⁶ This “land grab” brought the settlers into collision with indigenous Shona and Ndebele policies and customs.

Traditionally, land ownership among the Shona was a communal process, operating at different levels: familial, clan and village. Chiefs were essentially functionaries who allocated land in the best interests of their constituency. Among the Ndebele, the king and his chiefs had more direct power with respect to land allocation and intervention. Both peoples also believed that the real landowners were the ancestors and that particular lands were sacred. It was this clash between indigenous Africans (who regarded land as both a cultural and material resource) and the white settlers (who took a more expedient view) that would come to dominate the history of the country.

The immediate result was a number of conflicts, including the Anglo–Ndebele war of 1893, that led to the removal and eventual destruction of the Ndebele monarchy.⁷ This was followed by the first Chimurenga of 1896 – 1897. Although this war was partly a revolt against settler seizure of land, it was primarily a protest against hut tax,⁸ as well as a response to the simultaneous environmental calamities of rinderpest, locusts and drought. The local people believed that the settlers were destroying the balance of nature. During the First



War veterans put up a squatter camp on a white-owned farm. More than 600 white-owned farms throughout Zimbabwe were invaded in March 2000.

Chimurenga, colonial soldiers and police seized rebel crops and livestock (and thus helped to turn a natural drought into a famine). After a ferocious war that lasted 18 months and claimed 8 000 lives (Ranger, 1967), the local “rebels” were defeated, and the settlers created a colonial state. In the process, they institutionalised the land problem that successive governments were to grapple with and fail to resolve.

However, it should be noted that the settlers did not generate Zimbabwe’s land problem. There had been numerous pre-colonial land wars among and between the Shona and Ndebele. In 1898, the BSAC officially sanctioned the use of force in establishing a racial solution to the land issue in its new land policy. While settler farmers would have improved land tenure, and prospective farmers would continue to get land grants. According to the 1899 Order in Council, “the Council shall assign to the natives land sufficient for their occupation, whether as tribes or portions of tribes, and suitable for agriculture and pastoral requirement” (Palmer, 1977). This was a euphemism for the policy of forcibly resettling the defeated Africans in “Reserves”.

**settlers institutionalised
Zimbabwe’s land problem
during the First Chimurenga...
but they did not generate it**

By 1905, under this new land allocation policy, there were about 60 Natives Reserves (NRs), occupying about 22 per cent of Rhodesia. Nearly half of the African population of 700 000 now lived in Reserves. They had by then lost approximately 16 million hectares to the settlers. By 1920, the Native Reserves constituted an area of 8,7 million hectares (Rolin, 1978), while the number of settler farms (Company/ freehold) reached 2 500, encompassing an acreage of approximately 15 million hectares (Palmer, 1977).

Apart from the racial polarisation of land allocation, land utilisation also produced many clashes. The settlers were contemptuous of the traditional and indigenous system of land rotation cultivation, which they dubbed “slash and burn”. However, the traditional farming methods

were a survivalist methodology appropriate to the environment of relatively sparse (pre-colonial) population migrations and abundant land. The colonial stereotype of Africans as destructive farmers endured nevertheless, buttressed by the “environmental apocalypse” scenarios of H.E. Alvord, who, in the 1920s predicted disaster if

traditional African land usage methods continued.⁹ This stereotyping ignored the fact that colonial deep ploughing methods were actually more destructive to the soil than “traditional” methods.

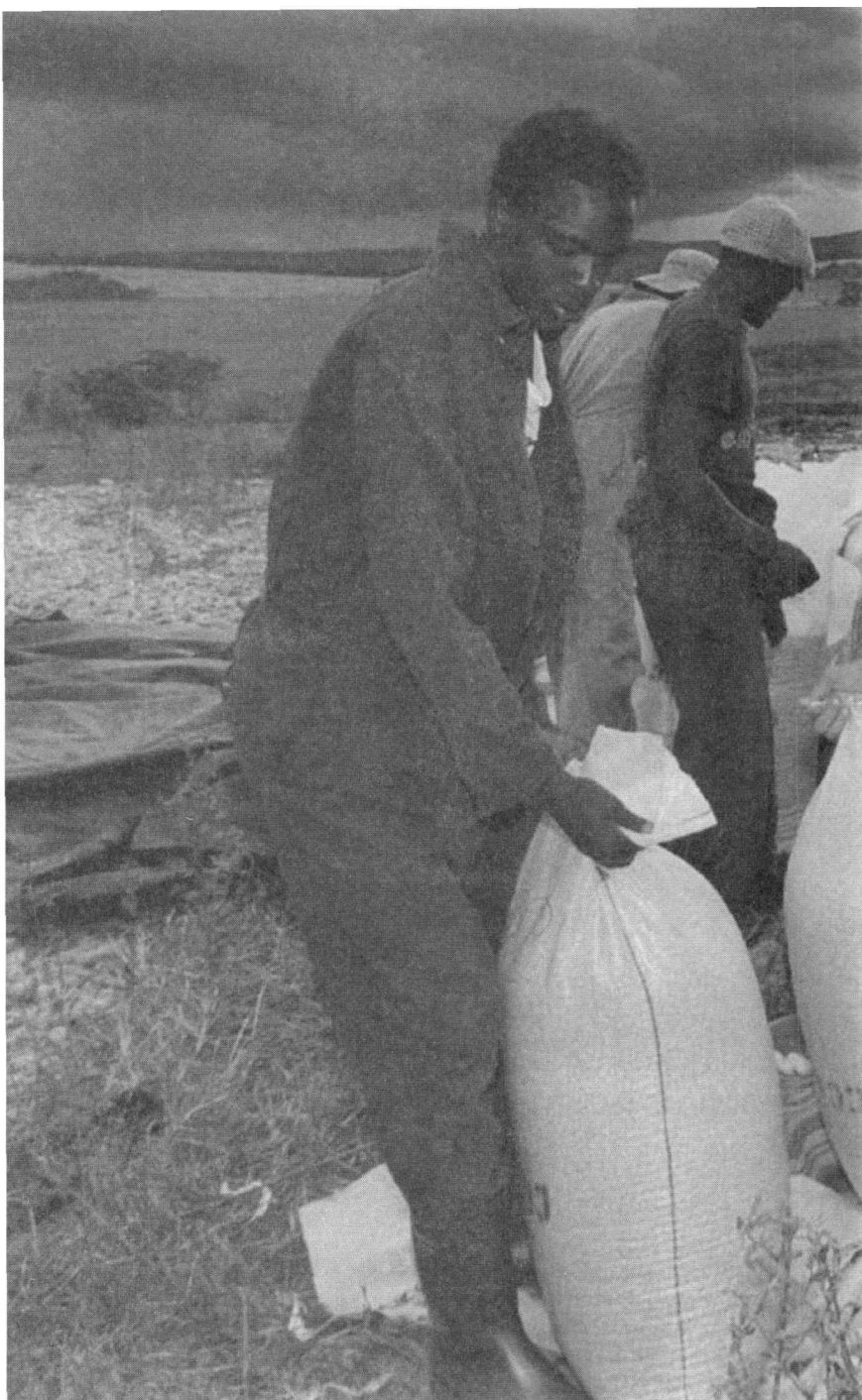
The government adopted Alvord’s recommendations on “centralisation” as a means of soil and environmental conservation. This involved “centralising” cultivated lands into large squares and setting aside other land squares for commercial grazing during the planting/growing season. After harvest, cattle were allowed to clean-up crop residues and uneaten herbage in and around cultivated land. The grazing lands were then rested. Simultaneously, African “demonstrators” were being trained at Domboshava and Tjolotjo to teach better farming methods to peasant farmers. In later years, these agricultural demonstrators were to come into conflict with the peasants.

The racial bias of state-imposed land allocation/ utilisation policies was one source of conflict. Another was demography. In 1890, the African population in Rhodesia numbered about 700 000 in an area of 150 000 km (Rolin, 1978). In 1893, African livestock numbered approximately 400 000 head (Palmer, 1977). By 1910, the African population was approximately 900 000; together with 700 000 head of cattle all were now crowded into Native Reserves comprising 70 000 km (or 8,7 million hectares). This crowding was aggravated by the competition among peasants to acquire and retain the limited amount of good land available in the NRs.

The settlers (who in 1910 numbered about 20 000) occupied 60 000 km (6 million hectares) of prime farming land (Palmer, 1977). By 1930, with the rural African population numbering approximately 1,3 million and possessing 1 million head of livestock, the demographic pressure in the NRs was clearly apparent. Not only were there conflicts between the administration and peasants, and between settler and African farmers, there were also acute intra-social disputes between and among families, chiefs and headmen for security of tenure. The rights to allocate, use and retain land often produced tensions that led to violence between people.

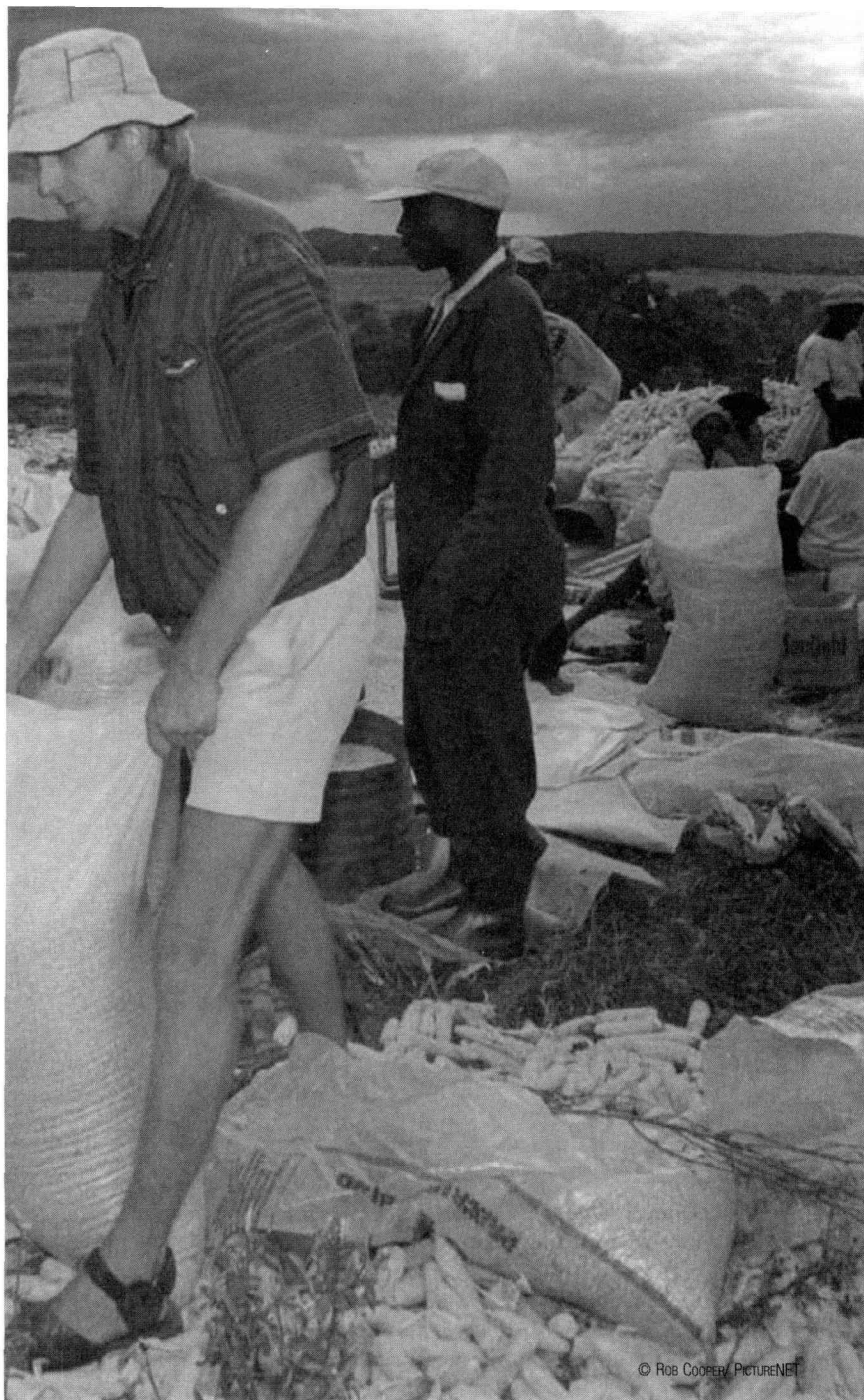
Another problem area was farm labour. During the first decade of the century, rural Africans produced 2,5 million bags of grain annually for their own use and for sale. The state responded by introducing the Maize Council Act. This inverted maize prices in a deliberate effort to buttress settler farms at the expense of so-called “kaffir-farming”, and to force peasants to seek employment as labourers on these farms.

Methods used to force peasants to provide labour were



often violent; the police and informal African agents of the police (known as “boys”) press-ganged rural people into labour through liberal use of threats and beatings (Wheeler, 1972). The “ticket system” was used by settler farm-owners to control and dominate their workers,¹⁰ and many workers were exploited and abused. Their situation was worsened by the notorious 1901 Masters and Servant Ordinance, which made it difficult for workers to receive compensation for duty or abuse-related injuries. However, severe penalties were exacted from workers for the smallest infringements against their employers (Mtetwa, 1987).

The result was a national legacy of physical and verbal abuse of farm-workers by settlers (and, at times, by higher ranking Africans). Allied to this was a history of non-compensation from the administration or from traditional authorities (chiefs and headmen). The chiefs were generally co-opted into the state system; there was also a tacit



Inverted maize prices impoverished African farmers, forcing them to seek work as labourers on white-owned farms in the early 1900s

assumption that the farm-workers had forfeited their traditional rural rights by living in farm compounds, and were thus outside the scope of traditional or state authorities for protection or redress.

1930 – 1959: State Intervention and Peasant Resistance

In January 1925, the Rhodesian government appointed the Morris Carter Land Commission to examine ways in which the growing land problem could be resolved. The Commission presented its Report in November 1925, recommending slight increases in the land allocation to both the settlers and Africans. This report became the basis for the 1931 Land Apportionment Act (LAA), which

codified the racial division of land in Rhodesia. Table 1 indicates land distribution under the LAA.

TABLE 1

Category	Acres	Percentage (of land)
European (settler) Area	19 179 174	50,8
Native Reserves	12 600 000	22,4
Native Purchased Areas	7 646 566	7,7
Forest Area	590 506	0,6
Unassigned Area	17 793 300	18,4
Undetermined Area	88 540	0,1
Total	98 686 080	100,0

Source: (Palmer, 1977 p. 147)



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Agricultural products are one of the major generators of Zimbabwe's national income.

The LAA was designed primarily to appease the anxieties of white settlers. This allocation of land on an essentially racial basis, and with no clear indication of whether or how land distribution fitted in with demographics, soil quality and climate, showed that the state was essentially fulfilling a racial/political agenda with agro-economic sub-themes, rather than vice versa. The LAA's intention was to safeguard the settler agricultural system, because by the mid-1920s, these farmers had emerged as the single most powerful grouping in the country.

Next, the administration turned its attention to the equally contentious problem of land utilisation, in other words, farming methods. The targets here were the Native Reserves, with "centralisation" becoming the interventionist solution. "Originally designed as a conservation measure... by which a division was made between exclusive arable and exclusively grazing land, 'centralisation' became a means of redistributing land in the Reserves" (Palmer, 1983). Land in the NRs was surveyed, pegged out, and "lines" were laid down for fields, houses and villages.

Centralisation was allied to the new gospel of soil conservation. Previously, soil conservation in the Reserves was confined to the protection of arable land, but from the mid-1940s, the mandate was increased to include the protection of grazing areas by pasture furrows and other measures (such as road contour drains, check dams for gully control, tree planting and fencing of critical areas). Grass buffer strips were introduced in 1948. By 1950, the state

claimed that 507 000 areas (22 per cent of cultivated lands) were protected against erosion by these measures (Rolin, 1977).

The period between 1940 and 1955 saw the introduction of a slew of highly interventionist and often arbitrary land allocation/utilisation measures, of which the most important were the Native Land Husbandry Act (NLHA) of 1952 and the Natural Resources Act (NRA) of 1942. In both cases, the dissonance between means and ends led to problems. While claiming that the goal was to save the country from agro-economic and environmental catastrophe, the means used — protectionism, compulsion and force — raised doubts about the real objectives. These Acts were also heavily influenced by the McIlwaine Commission of Enquiry Report (1939). The Report was unequivocal about blaming Africans for the looming catastrophe: "the result of the deliberate laying waste of large areas of land by wasteful and destructive methods of cultivation has been a cry by Natives for more land" (Weinmann, 1991). The tacit agenda was to show that Africans agro-economic behaviour was inherently destructive, unsustainable and thoughtless.

Meanwhile, the demographic problems continued. By 1945, the white settler population had increased to 140 000, including 68 000 living on 6 408 farms (Iliffe, 1990). The African population had increased to 4 million (with 2,8 million in the rural areas), with its rural population density increasing from 10 persons per km² to 33 persons



Zimbabwe is one of the world's largest tobacco producers.

per km². By 1955, 55 of the 98 Native Reserves were overpopulated (Palmer, 1997), both in terms of people and of livestock.

In 1896, rinderpest had devastated the herds of the nation, leaving only 25 000 head of cattle in the entire country (Patel, 1985). Nevertheless, there was a major increase in the cattle population in the first decades of the twentieth century. In 1910, Africans owned 250 000 head of cattle. By 1925, this had increased to one and a half million. By 1930, the cattle population alone numbered nearly two million, and if sheep and goats were included, the total number of livestock approached the three million mark (Patel, 1985).

Once again, the state found a politically convenient explanation to justify its solution of de-stocking. The Herskowitz "cattle complex" theory (1926) put forward the view that reluctance by Africans to sell or kill cattle either for the market or privately, and their apparent indifference to overgrazing, stemmed from their cultures and traditions (Rhodesian Farmer, 1926). Africans, it was argued, held onto their animals for reasons of "prestige and status", regardless of the agro-economic environment. In other words, it was implied that the societal norms of Africans overrode the needs of agro-environmental development.

Having thus "proved" that it was the "irrational" behaviour of Africans and not its own laws that were the root cause of the land problem, the administration began using a combination of persuasion and force to ensure

compliance with its policies. Chiefs and headmen were rewarded with money, regalia and other tokens of state appreciation if they persuaded their people to peacefully comply with the provisions of the various land Acts. The period 1935 – 1955 saw the forcible removal of 67 000 African families from their traditional lands into new NRs to make way for white-owned farms on state woodlands (Magaya, 1981). Bulldozers were used to raze homes and armed police rounded up villagers in trucks. Although I have been unable to find reliable evidence of deaths occurring directly as a result of these forced removals, archival records detail a number of cases of beatings of recalcitrant villagers and even headmen.

De-stocking was also forcibly implemented: "Government Notice No. 612 of 29/11/1944 declared that 49 NRs were overstocked and laid down the stock-carrying capacity of each. From 1946 – 1979, 1 126 366 head of cattle were disposed of" (Weinmann, 1991). Once again, leverage was exerted on chiefs and headmen, who were given culling quotas that their villages had to meet. Failure to meet these quotas resulted in the chief and sometimes the entire village having to pay fines. In other cases, police confiscated "excess cattle" from the villagers without paying compensation.

The Demonstrators tasked with enforcing land use rules were themselves a source of conflict. It was their job to enforce contour ridging, prevent stream bank cultivation and the planting of rice and maize in the vleis. At times, the enthusiasm with which the Demonstrators carried out these

Land became one of the rallying cries of peasant conscientisation during the Second Chimurenga



tasks led to clashes. In 1947, for instance, 17 peasants farmers, including a headmen, were fined for assaulting Demonstrators in Bindura District (Palmer, 1977). Fines were also levied on those who refused to plough contour ridges, and the crops of those who had planted in vleis and along ridges were destroyed.

State legislation engendered two ongoing responses. The first was passive resistance. Peasants were ordered to build roads and enact soil conservation measures, working on drain strips, galley dams, contour ridges and rotational grazing. But the conscript labourers resisted by either not doing the work at all, or deliberately doing their jobs inadequately. "In October 1952 (in Makoni Area), 48 152 yards of grass strips had to be repaired, 31 963 yards of grass buffer strips had to be repegged after being destroyed by landholders" (Ranger, 1985).

The second result was open resistance to the NLHA. Demonstrators and white land-development officers were attacked, verbally and physically, as were some chiefs and headmen who tried to implement the new measures.

In 1955, Kesiya Madzorera, the Gokwe representative of Benjamin Burombo's African Voice¹¹ was charged with defying section 49 of the Natural Reserves Act. (He had cleared trees from and ploughed 25 acres more than he was "legally" entitled to.) The case became politicised, he

appealed against the fine, and the case was dismissed. Kesiya became a folk hero and peasant farmers subsequently took their resistance even further. "Freedom ploughing", which defied the allocations and prohibitions of the NLHA, became the most effective weapon that was used to blunt implementation of the NLHA nationally. In January 1961, the under-secretary for Nature, Agriculture and Lands lamented countrywide freedom ploughing: "people were ploughing all over the place and disregarding land allocations" (Ranger, 1985). The NLHA and efforts to enforce it led to the emergence of a new generation of African nationalists, and a new brand of nationalism that would culminate in war within the next decade.¹²

1960 —1979: Settler Nationalism, Armed Resistance and Rural Violence

In 1963, the hardline conservative party of the settlers, the Rhodesia Front (RF) took office. Primarily supported by white farmers, the RF mandate was to pull Rhodesia out of the Federation, cut links with Britain, and entrench white minority rule. In 1969, the RF brought in the Land Tenure Act (No. 55). The primary aim of the Land Tenure Act was



to update the LAA, providing even more inflexible regulations. The main new feature was the redivision of Rhodesia into roughly equal African and white areas. The Special Native Purchase Areas and Unreserved categories were now formally abolished. The settler area was also protected by a number of new constitutional safeguards, instituted to prevent the legal abolition of land segregation (Marshall, 1976).

However, important grassroots developments concerning land use/allocation were also taking place. In 1963, the NLHA was suspended and replaced by the Tribal Trust Land Bill (TTLB) in 1965. The TTLB established Tribal Law Authorities (TLAs) to control land policy in Communal Areas (CAs). The regulation and policy of land in Rhodesia was now handed over to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which (in theory) recognised tribal law. The aim was to bind the chiefs more closely to the state apparatus.

In reality, however, the TLAs were powerless to enforce either farming methods or land allocation. The "freedom farming" of the late 1950s continued and a new phenomenon arose: the "wanton" destruction of trees, both in CAs and on commercial farms (Tilley, 1993). Villagers proceeded to strip and, in some cases, uproot small trees. This form of resource poaching fulfilled a genuine need (trees were used for construction of huts, for firewood/fuel and fences); but it was also clearly a form of protest against

state law.

There was also an increase in land/boundary conflicts. The increased migrations of locals and foreigners into and out of kraals, villages, wards and Districts, and the ensuing confusion over land entitlements added to the growing crisis in the CAs. Various boundary disputes (for instance, between individuals and between villages) were commonplace, and chiefs were often ignored or over-ruled by bureaucrats. The issues of land tenure security and inheritance also posed problems. More rural Africans were moving to towns in search of jobs, while others sought work on farms. However, both the farm and urban dwellers still owned or wished to have access to land in rural areas. The traditions of polygamy and large families also added to land pressures.

Demography also played a role in the conflicts. In 1909, the African population was 3 618 159, whereas by 1962, it was 4 817 950 (a 33 per cent increase) (Rhodesian Census of Population, 1963). The average annual population growth was 15 per cent. Cattle owned by Africans numbered approximately 2,5 million by 1970, and if other animals were included, this figure rose to over 3 millions (Rhodesian Census of Population, 1970). Yet the total quantity of land available to Africans had not increased, with the amount of fertile land actually diminishing.

The result was sporadic conflict over land use, land



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allocation and security of tenure. Some of the chiefs in the TLAs were assaulted, threatened or killed (Ranger, 1985). Others had their lands dug up or their trees stripped. Some were forced to award land grants to locals or so-called “foreigners” (not local to that particular region). There were also serious boundary disputes between villages. The period 1961 – 1968 saw an upsurge in land disputes brought before chiefs for mediation, as well as an increase in fights between individuals and families over land (Riddell, 1978). This conflict would soon become endemic.

1961 — 1968 saw an upsurge in land disputes brought before chiefs for mediation, and an increase in fights between individuals and families over land

The Second Chimurenga: 1966 — 1979

The Second Chimurenga (war of liberation) initially began in the early 1960s as primarily urban forms of protest against an increasingly repressive state. The Rhodesian Police crushed these protests, jailing hundreds. This radicalised nationalists, who began to consider armed resistance necessary. Ironically, even though the land issue was one of the original underlying reasons for the war, it would be some years before the nationalists formally began to conscientise the peasants. During the second Chimurenga, violence (both “loud” and “silent”) reached a peak. An estimated 50 000 people of all races (but mainly Africans) died in the war, with countless others injured (Evans, 1982). The bulk of casualties occurred in the rural areas, most of which were operational areas. The distinguishing feature of this conflict was the systematic and sustained (but sometimes arbitrary) use of violence. “Loud violence” took the form of whippings, beatings, torture and murder. The violence was mainly perpetrated upon civilians by Rhodesian Security Forces (RSF), police and the guerrillas; an often overlooked feature was the increase in violence among civilians themselves. The Second Chimurenga was as much a *civil war* as it was a war of liberation.

The Second Chimurenga may actually have been “zvimurenga” (wars of liberation rather than a single war of liberation). Nationalist historians such as Ranger and Moorcraft have portrayed the nationalist struggle as a monolithic, unified and purposeful “just war”. However, Sithole (1978) gives insights into the internal leadership struggles of the liberation movements, while Kriger (1989) examines the issues of violence between the guerrillas and peasants and among the peasants themselves. While the overall rubric of a war of liberation from white minority

rule is still sustainable, within this “just war,” were several macro- and micro-level civil wars for liberation. Coercion and violence were the common themes in these processes.

A battery of repressive security laws, including the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act (1960) and the Emergency Powers Act (1960), allowed the RSF to carry out violent reprisals against guerrillas and civilians with little fear of legal punishment. As the security situation worsened, particularly in the Gaza and Manica operational

sectors of eastern Zimbabwe, so the RSF increasingly targeted civilians for torture and murder. This was partly because the Rhodesian “Fire Force” tactical doctrine called for a “body count” approach, in which successes were measured by the number of dead bodies brought back after a battle. As guerrilla resistance hardened, however, Rhodesian forces were increasingly forced to make up the numbers of dead bodies with civilians, either killed in the crossfire or shot out of hand. In an echo of BSAP tactics in the 1896 – 1897 war, the RSF also increasingly used a scorched earth policy, sometimes razing entire villages, shooting or stealing livestock, and burning crops.

Land became one of the rallying cries of peasant conscientisation, as peasants were well aware of local land grievances. The guerrillas’ task was to elevate the personal and local discontent of the peasants to a national level, and to make them aware that the war was being fought to redress the historical experience of land dispossession. This politicisation process was neither quick nor easy. Indeed, while they advocated the necessity of using force against the settler state, the guerrillas nevertheless used force against the peasants. The guerrillas could not survive without peasant support; however, the methods used to recruit that support involved not only persuasion but violent coercion (Kriger, 1988).

This led to a paradox: nationally, the guerrilla war was a protracted one, but at a local level, because of the omnipresent danger of the RSF and “sell-outs”, the politicisation and mobilisation process was often done with haste and violence. Methods of politicisation could be either protracted or abrupt, depending on the area. In areas where they had control, the guerrillas held day-time politicisation meetings to explain who they were and what they were fighting for; they would also try to convince the peasants that they all shared a similar cause. In less secure areas, however, the guerrillas often held “pungwes” (night-time rallies). “Pungwes” evolved from initially hesitant meetings in the early 1970s to confident gatherings in the late 1970s. With the guerrillas moving in groups of 200 to 300, and establishing an overwhelming presence among the peasant

Opposite: “The guerrillas could not survive without peasant support; however, the methods used to recruit that support involved not only persuasion but violent coercion.”

communities, the RSF did not often dare to attack the gatherings (especially in Gaza Province).

However, the guerrillas did not always have this advantage. In unfamiliar areas and/or areas held by the RSF, the guerrillas of necessity conducted their politicisation and recruitment campaigns abruptly and haphazardly. Because there was little time to persuade locals to support their cause, support was often garnered through coercion. This created confusion in the minds of villagers — violence was being used to persuade them to perform violence against state violence. Local situations and contexts were also not taken into account during these recruitment campaigns. For example, in 1970 in Gokwe, local peasants denied having land grievances against local white farmers and administration, as they enjoyed modest local population densities, good soils and a low level of state intervention. The guerrillas insisted, however, that the national land grievance was also a local land grievance, and that Gokwe peasants had no choice but to play a role in the struggle. This was one example of a local land grievance being invented in order to fulfil a national mandate (Mhepo, 1985).

Guerrillas were also drawn into rural class and power conflicts between chiefs and headmen, wealthy and poorer peasants, shop-owners and different levels of farm workers. As they often lacked the time to investigate these socio-economic issues, guerrillas sometimes resorted to hasty and unwarranted steps against alleged wrongdoers.

However, the war did not lead to a complete breakdown of rural law and order. The situation (from a Rhodesian perspective) was indeed bleak: guerrilla infiltration increased, even as state legislation and the size of the RSF increased and there were more and more breakdowns in state power in the rural areas. The entire country had become an operational zone. The agro-economic situation rapidly became untenable as more and more white farmers abandoned their farms.¹³ The war caused continuous internal rural and rural/city migrations, and in many areas, peasants implemented freedom farming.

Even in this context of rural crisis, order was enforced through violence. With regard to land allocations, Protected Villages (PVs) were established to monitor the peasants and cut their contact with the guerrillas. Although the guerrillas still infiltrated the PV's, harsh regulations governing land plots and tenure and enforced curfews maintained some form of control over land use and allocation. To some extent, the guerrillas themselves enforced land policies. Chief/headmen whom they found guilty of selling or giving land to outsiders were punished. "Kutengesa ivhu" (selling traditional land) could result in death to both seller and buyer (Kriger, 1988).

In addition (and this is an issue worthy of further research), for all the guerrillas' attempts to rally peasants with the promise that the war was being fought to force settlers off the land, peasants did not invade abandoned white farms during the war. For instance, in Manicaland between 1973 – 1979, 1 122 white farms were abandoned, but neither farm buildings nor land were occupied, even temporarily, by the supposedly land-hungry peasants. This was partly due to peasant fears of RSF reprisals, but also because the villagers had been warned against, and in some areas, punished by the guerrillas for unsanctioned land occupations. The message the guerrillas sent was clearly that

land redistribution would occur *after*, not *during* the war. This message was buttressed by the peasants' own imperatives; at the time, they had a practical need to consolidate their own land-holdings rather than seek new land in unfamiliar areas. Moreover, chiefs and spirit mediums — the guardians of traditional land customs —

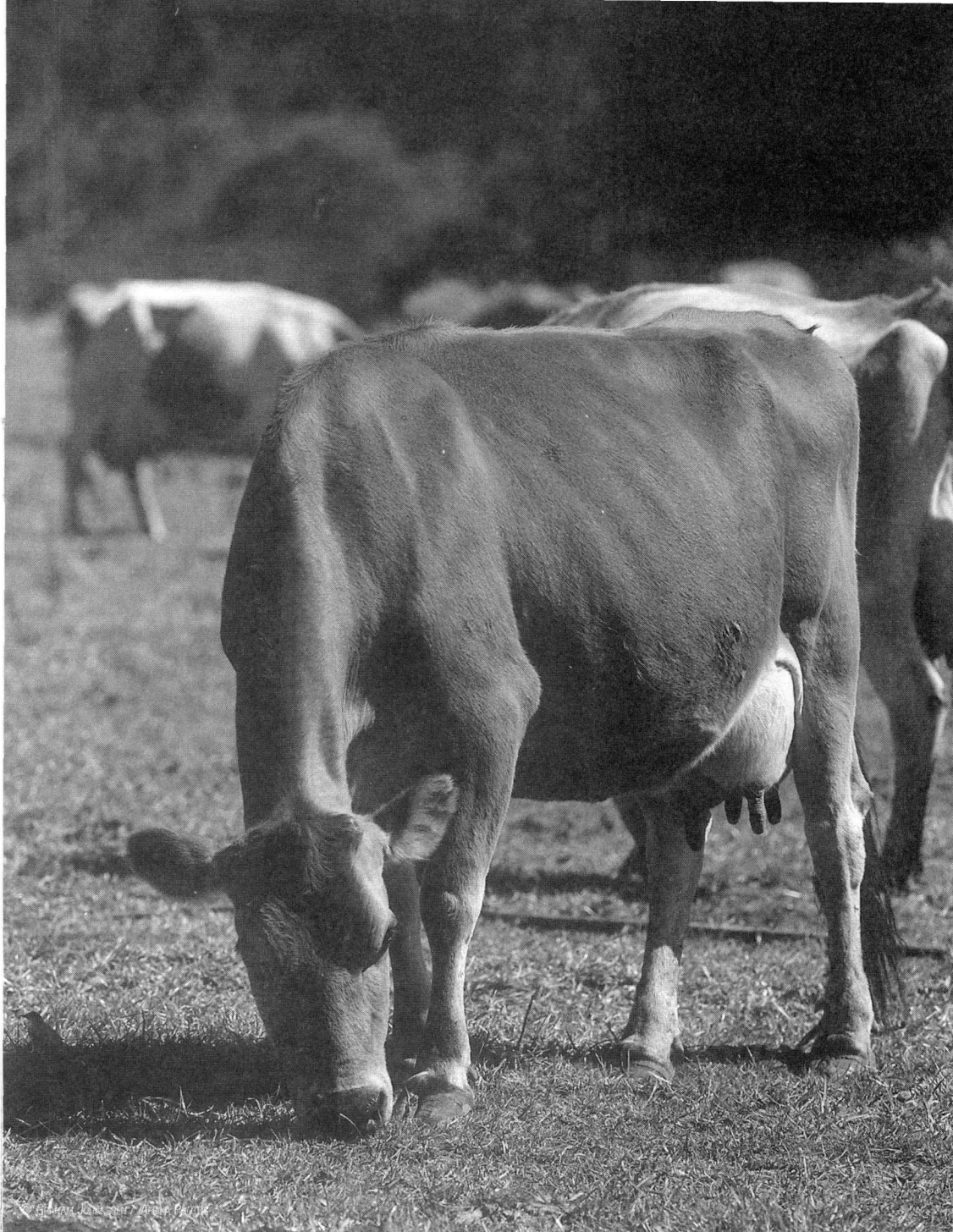
The message the guerrillas sent was clearly that land redistribution would occur *after*, not *during* the war

did not sanction land invasions.

The war also saw an upsurge of "silent" violence, which included the use of defoliants by the Rhodesian Air Force and pilots of private planes (Moorecraft and Laughlin, 1980). In particular, livestock were targeted in two ways. First, peasants refused to take their cattle to dip-tanks. These protests had begun as early as 1964, when peasants in Tanda/Makoni filled the local dip-tanks with stones or destroyed them. These actions had ominous results: "Before the year-long protest was quelled by the arrival of troops in helicopters, 400 cattle owners were jailed and at least 3 000 cattle died from tick-borne diseases" (Ranger, 1985).

In 1975, there were approximately 8 000 dip-tanks or spray races. Dipping was both compulsory and unpopular. The guerrillas rallied the peasants to refuse to pay a dip fee.¹⁴ Villagers were also ordered to destroy dip-tanks, and dip attendants were beaten or killed. The subsequent closure of dip-tanks and the collapse of the inoculation system led to a significant increase in livestock illnesses and deaths. Between 1975 and 1979, it was estimated that 250 000 cattle died from preventable tick borne-disease (*The Farmer*, 1978). The increase in murders of livestock, health Inspectors and field workers was also alarming, and was associated with an outbreak of trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness) among cattle in 1976 in the north-east of the country.

More direct forms of attack on cattle were stock theft and mutilation, which were also gestures of resistance against the state and white commercial farmers. By 1976, the situation had become so serious that the Stock Theft Amendment Act was introduced; it increased the minimum sentence to ten years.¹⁵ Both guerrillas and villagers stole, mutilated and killed commercially-farmed cattle. In some cases, pedigree cattle were simply shot and left to rot as a sign of contempt. However, the violence against livestock became reciprocal. The RSF and the police in turn confiscated or "liberated" villagers' livestock, often in broad daylight and at gunpoint. White farmers formed vigilante groups in some areas to recover their cattle, seizing and killing villagers' livestock (*The Farmer*, July 6 1978). In 1979, the government launched Operation Bulldog, an RSF/Police response to fight stock theft and escalating crop theft in the Operational Areas.



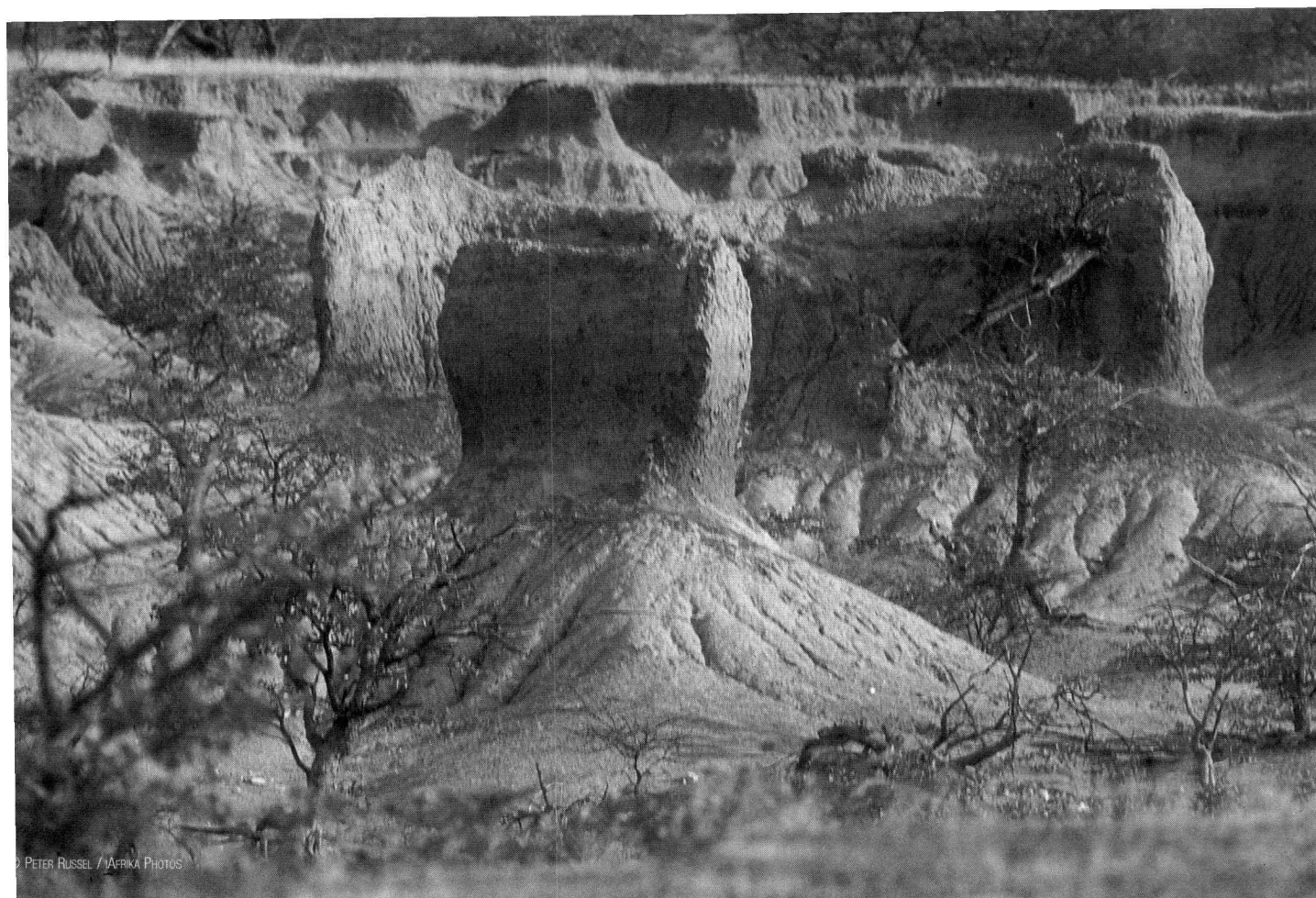
The Second Chimurenga saw an upsurge of “silent” violence, which included the killing of cattle belonging to settlers.

LAND AND VIOLENCE IN ZIMBABWE 1980 – 1999

At the Lancaster House Conference in 1979, two important agreements reached between the various political parties and the British government were that the new constitution would remain inviolate for at least ten years,¹⁶ and that the property rights of commercial farmers would be protected.¹⁷ After 1980, the new government, anxious to attract foreign investment, underlined its “reconciliation” theme by declaring that white farmers were not the enemy and were in fact a valuable asset to the new Zimbabwe. The

Tekere incident of 1981,¹⁸ as well as allegations of white farmers/Fifth Brigade collusion in Matebeleland against “dissidents” and peasants gave some the impression that the government was pandering to the white lobby.

The vulnerability of white farmers to bandit attack and to farm murders between 1981 – 1987¹⁹ may actually have strengthened the farmers’ bargaining power with the state. This vulnerability gave them the status of innocent victims and veterans of continuing violence who were in need of state assistance. As Stromm (1988) points out, “the government continued to give political statements of intent by announcing agricultural revisions such as the Land



Acquisition Act (1985), but in reality the whites were co-opting government into their mainstream, rather than vice versa”.

During the 1980s, the parameters of the land crisis widened considerably. This was no longer just a question of finding more land for a spatially fixed but increasing population: there was now the added dimension of resettling thousands of displaced people.

Resettlement had become an integral part of the land allocation problem. The government's plan was to resettle 18 000 families on about 1,2 million hectares of land that had been abandoned during the war. In 1982, however, the number of settlers targeted for resettlement was raised to 162 000 families on 10 million hectares. By 1990, the government had acquired 3,5 million hectares presumably for this purpose (Moyo, 1987), but a key problem was that only 19 per cent of the land acquired was prime land, the rest was either mediocre or unsuitable for agriculture or grazing.

The demographics were also unsettling. In 1982, the population of the CAs was 3,9 million, and the average population density was 27 people per km², (although in Manicaland and Masvingo, this increased to 80 people per km in some districts) (Zimbabwe Government Population Census, 1983). By 1987, the population in the CAs had risen to 5,1 million, the national average population was approximately 6,5 million, and the national average

population density was 36 people per km² (Zimbabwe Government Population Census, 1987). Numbers of cattle had fluctuated because of drought and other factors, but by 1988, the cattle in the CAs had increased to nearly 2 million, with increased pressure on the land as a result.

By the 1990s, it was clear that Zimbabwe was faced with a crisis concerning land use (both agricultural and environmental), as well as land allocation. Deforestation had reached serious

proportions, along with siltation, overgrazing, stream-bank cultivation, gullying and general loss of bio-diversity. Commercial farmers revived the traditional stereotype of destructive peasant farmers and attributed the problems to them (*The Farmer*, May 4, 1990).

Others believed that while some of the land practices in the CAs were destructive, the real issue was not farming practices, but embedded socio-economic problems that led to destructive land usage methods. These problems included overpopulation and overcrowding on good land and increasing rural poverty (caused by various factors including drought, fewer jobs on farms, low yields, lower prices for products, transport problems, lack of funds for equipment, lack of infra-structural assistance, lack of adequate representation with the bureaucracy, lack of security of tenure and increasing familial dysfunctions in the CAs).²⁰

Resettlement had become an integral part of the land allocation problem



Another theory laid the blame on the culture of “madiro”, postulating that the general breakdown of law and order and the upsurge of violence during the war of liberation had led to a rural culture of “madiro” (we do as we please). This culture opposes bureaucracy not so much because of its history of interventionist and exclusionary approaches to solving rural problems, but because “madiro” often involves opposition for the sake of opposition (Cheater, 1994). Thus, the apparently self-destructive land policies and continuous destruction of woodlands and wetlands can be seen as a historically continuous protest against state bureaucracy. However, this view negates the possibility that many environmentally destructive practices are in fact short-term survival strategies in the face of an increasingly harsh social and land environment.

The Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) was introduced in 1990. Its underlying principles were that deregulation, privatisation and reduction of government subsidies, although initially harsh medicine, would ultimately benefit the economy and lead to increased IMF and World Bank assistance. It was touted as an antidote to the protectionist, centralised economy of the 1980s. However, its implementation coincided with the drought of 1990 – 1993. This resulted in increasing unemployment, inflation and high prices,²¹ as well as aggravated rural problems.

Deforestation, siltation, overgrazing, stream-bank cultivation, gullying and loss of bio-diversity contributed to the land crisis in the 1990s

The government, under pressure from its rural constituency, pushed through the Land Acquisition Act (1992), which entitled the government to designate commercial farms for resettlement.²² Under the terms of the Act, the government gave notice that it would be acquiring commercial (mainly white-owned) farms for redistribution purposes. This exercise has proved to be singularly controversial, both nationally and internationally.²³

Many white commercial farmers initially opposed the 1992 Act itself, but since then the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) appears to be divided between those who still oppose the entire “Designation” exercise and those who accept the need to sacrifice land for resettlement (albeit while opposing the modalities of redistribution). Conflicting political statements (by a number of role-players associated with this issue) that oscillate between militant and conciliatory rhetoric have aggravated the land crisis, leading to a diplomatic rift between the Zimbabwean and British governments. The British government insists that it is not opposed to land redistribution per se, provided that this is done in a transparent manner with the intention of alleviating rural poverty. It has however, accused the Zimbabwean government of failing to satisfactorily explain the modalities of land redistribution/designation, as well as failing to establish the necessary infrastructures to make it a



During the 1990s “squatters” — peasants — began to occupy white-owned farms.

sustainable and achievable goal (*The Independent*, November 8, 1997). They have thus been reluctant to finance land reform plans. The Zimbabwean government has retaliated by claiming that the real agenda of the British is to protect the neo-colonialist agenda of expatriate agrobusiness (*The Herald*, September 14, 1997).

At the domestic level, two important developments have occurred. In the mid-1980s, in response to failure of the resettlement exercise, landless peasants began to occupy and use land that belonged to the politicians and the black elite. These communities were termed "squatters" by the media, and in some areas, police and army units were deployed to forcibly remove them. Numerous arrests were made and bulldozers and trucks were used to raze their dwellings and remove their property, reminiscent of the forced evictions 40 years earlier by the colonial state.

In Matebeleland, this exercise was carried out with an exceptional degree of violence. Crops were burnt; villagers were openly murdered or simply disappeared. Atrocities performed by the Fifth Brigade in the "dissident" war that took place between 1981 and 1987 (Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, 1994). The genuine land grievances of Matebeleland peasants were subsumed by a wider and brutal struggle against a local insurgency of ex-ZIPRA combatants. (ZIPRA was the armed wing of the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU); it fought mainly in the South and Western areas of the country during the Second Chimurenga.) The government saw the Matabeleland peasants as part of the problem and by the time of the Unity Accord in 1987 an estimated 6 000 rural people in Matebeleland had become casualties of this "dirty" war. This war, initially against ex-ZIPRA combatants (some of whom were sponsored or whose units had been infiltrated by South African soldiers) had by the mid-1980s widened in scope; the dissidents now included traumatised peasants and jobless youths. The worsening effects of drought and desertification in Matebeleland and the blatant diversion of environmental resources to Mashonaland also alienated sentiment in Matebeleland. That the dissident war was in many ways a continuation of the ethnic and ideological conflict between ZAPU and ZANU — transposed to post-independent Zimbabwe — is undeniable. But what is often overlooked is that it was also a conflict over environmental resources. It was in some ways a protest against ZANU apathy and ZAPU failure to prevent the desertification of Matebeleland.

During the 1990s, the "squatters" began to occupy white-owned farms. In June 1998, hundreds of peasants moved onto farms in the Marondera area. These "Svosve villagers" triggered a series of copycat "invasions" in other areas, including Bindura. The results were intriguing and paradoxical. Commercial farmers had already upgraded farm security during the second Chimurenga era, using Agric-Alert systems.²⁴ There were claims that the farm invasions were a political ploy to force white farmers off the land (*The Farmer*, July 27, 1998). Many farmers vowed to fight the squatters, and they certainly possessed the necessary weapons to do so.²⁵ Others vowed to uproot squatter crops. However, defiant squatters threatened to set

alight any tractor that entered "their" land. Others began to cut down trees on the commercial farms. The situation was made more tense by a series of murders, robberies and assaults on commercial farmers and their families in Mashonaland East. There were apocalyptic fears that these were not random acts but the precursors of a general rural uprising against white commercial farmers (*The Farmer*, July 27, 1998). This upsurge in "silent" violence and militant rhetoric seemed to foretell a catastrophic outbreak of "loud" violence.

The upsurge in "silent" violence and militant rhetoric in the 1990s seemed to foretell a catastrophic outbreak of "loud" violence

However, there were in fact few incidents of "loud" violence between the squatters and commercial farmers. Villagers on the farm of Harry Orphanides (the Marondera CFU Chairman) chanted revolutionary songs and occasionally made threatening gestures, but did not physically abuse farmers or farm-workers or

damage property. Orphanides later commented, "I was really surprised. They seemed quite well-disciplined and their leader Mapranga, who I believe is a War Veteran, kept them in line. Things got a little tense but it could have been a lot worse" (*The Farmer*, August 3, 1998).

The reason for the absence of "loud" violence was mostly due to the restraint and compromise shown on all sides. Although most commercial farmers were equipped with firearms, in their discussions with the villagers and police, they made a point of not openly displaying their weapons, which could have been deemed provocative. The villagers reciprocated by not destroying any property: "We know that vabhunu (whites) have got guns, if they had threatened us with guns, we would have set fire to their houses... This land is ours" (*The Farmer*, August 16, 1988).

THE WAR VETERANS: 1980 – 2000

The twin socio-economic catastrophes of increased rural poverty and the AIDS pandemic foregrounded the issue of war veterans in the national consciousness. By 1992, Zimbabwe had approximately 2 million unemployed citizens, with a spiralling cost of living in both rural and urban areas. Although many ex-combatants were successfully re-integrated into urban or rural life after 1980, a substantial number slipped deeper into destitution and social ostracism. In 1980, there were approximately 65 000 ZANLA and ZIPRA guerrillas. About 20 000 of these became part of the new Zimbabwe National Army. The rest, who were officially demobilised, were awarded a monthly pension of Z\$185 until 1983 and encouraged to form self-help co-operatives and/or receive skills training (Musemwa 1996). Beyond this, there was little national attempt to assist their socio-economic re-integration. By 1995, studies showed that at least a quarter of Zimbabwe's rural population was earning less than the poverty datum figure of Z\$4 000 per annum; nor were they growing sufficient crops or keeping enough livestock to feed their families (CSO Demographic and Health survey, 1995).

Many ex-combatants had become victims of the twin scourges of poverty and AIDS. Many of the dead and dying



Chengerai "Hitler" Hunzvi, leader of the Zimbabwe Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA) with supporters.

were well-known in their local areas as genuine ex-fighters. After the war, however, they were ignored. Villagers were often resentful of party functionaries who eulogised heroes in death, yet ignored them while they lived (Parade, 1993). The gap between the ruling party and grassroots communities increased, as did the sense that the government was misappropriating the Second Chimurenga by manufacturing a self-serving mythology for itself.

In April 1989, the Zimbabwe War Veterans Association (ZWVA) was formed, comprising ex-combatants from ZANLA and ZIPRA. It was observed that "the formation of ZWVA was a reactive initiative taken by ex-combatants when it had become clear that government had failed to assist them" (Musemwa, 1996).

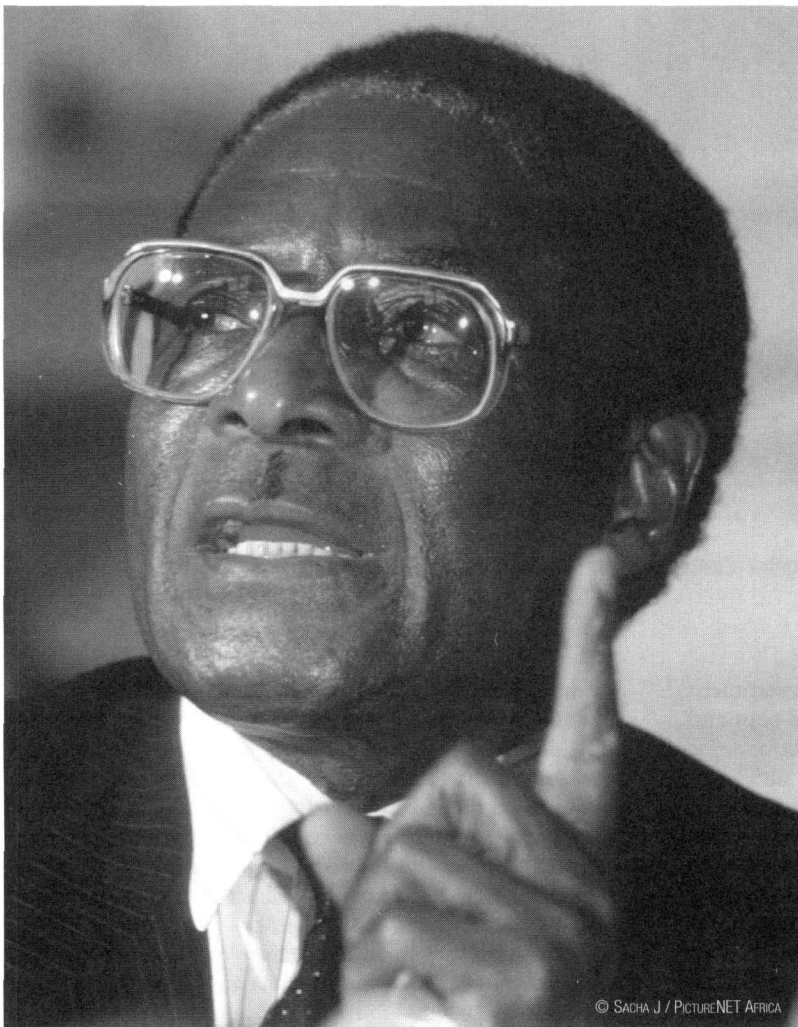
It has also been argued that the war veterans issue became a contest between government and ex-combatants over the question of who possessed legitimate war credentials

(*Financial Gazette*, November 3, 1997). By 1991, the government (after initially ignoring the ZWVA) began negotiations with it regarding the War Veterans Administration Bill (1991), the War Veterans Act (1992) and War Victims Compensation Act (1993). The administering of compensation for war victims, however, was grossly inefficient and corrupt. In theory, all proven ex-combatants who had been injured during the liberation war were entitled to financial compensation on a scale proportional to the severity of their injuries. In practice, however, the system became increasingly chaotic between 1993 – 1996. Controversy over differing official and grassroots definitions of war veterans, interventions by the ZANU-PF party hierarchy, falsified injury claims and a general lack of accountability saw the government paying out nearly Z\$80 million, all too often to those least in need. The government's failure to financially compensate grassroots

ex-combatants, especially those who had genuine war credentials and who had genuinely suffered, precipitated a political and financial crisis in 1997.

At the ZANU-PF summit in Mutare in September 1997, President Mugabe bowed to pressure from the war veterans and announced a package for war veterans that would pay each genuine war veteran a lump sum of Z\$50 000 and a gratuity for life of Z\$5 000 per month (*The Herald* September 17, 1997). The cost to the nation of this largesse was estimated at Z\$4 billion, and precipitated a national financial crisis. Ironically, it also prompted a crisis within

his authoritarian control of ZWVA, and was accused by some of having presidential ambitions. The government, wary and tired of the ZWVA's demands, moved to sideline the organisation. Hunzvi's claims in 1999 that the 1997 disbursements were essentially a statement of intent by government and that every war veteran is in fact entitled to Z\$500 000 further alienated the government (*The Independent*, June 4, 1999). By mid-1999, however, factional struggles within the war veterans' movement and mounting criticism of the government were bringing the two sides closer to the rapprochement that was to become so evident



President Robert Mugabe

The government failed to realise that many of the rural poor and squatters being evicted from farms were war veterans

the war veterans' movement. The Chidyausiku Commission (appointed in August 1997 to investigate abuses in the War Victims Compensation payouts from 1993 – 1997) split the ZWVA into factions which either opposed or approved the investigation. This friction was accompanied by power struggles between ZWVA chairman Chenjerai Hunzvi and various rivals. Hunzvi came in for increasing criticism for

in 2000. By 2000, Hunzvi's war veterans had effectively become the "military wing" of ZANU-PF in the "war" against white commercial farmers.

Land was one of the war veterans' primary grievances. Ex-combatants, war veterans and civilian war veterans were united in their displeasure with government land policy. The ruling party was accused of taking prime land and



Presidents Mugabe (Zimbabwe) and Laurent Kabila (DRC).

doing little to assist the rural poor. The government meanwhile failed to realise that many of the rural poor and even some of the squatters being evicted from farms were actually war veterans. Many of the latter would ultimately claim financial compensation, partly because they had been denied land compensation. Interestingly, many war veterans bought agricultural implements (especially tractors) with their 1997 payouts. Generally, they tried to improve land *utilisation* methods rather than pressure government for better land *allocation*. This latter aspect has remained an issue for peasants and squatters. It also needs to be mentioned that there have been some disputes between war veterans and peasants over land. In the early 1990s, government agreed that 20 per cent of all resettlement land would be reserved for war veterans, with the rest going to landless peasants (*The Farmer*, July 7, 1994). But allocation and prioritisation disputes over land resettlement have led some peasants to complain that war veterans, who had already received financial compensation, were also receiving preferential treatment in land allocation at their expense (*The Daily News*, September 6, 1999).

Moreover, demands for compensation went further than war veterans' demands for compensation for fighting against the RSF. There was also a need for redress for the trauma and injuries that civilians experienced at the hands

of the RSF, the guerrillas, and their fellow villagers (Kriger, 1988). This in turn led to the formation of the Ex-Detainees and Retrenched Association and War Collaborators Association. Its members also claimed to be war veterans and pressed the government for compensation. The funds already paid out to the war veterans and the compensation claimed by other disgruntled groups, may be the price the government has had to pay to civilians for not revealing the horrors they endured at the hands of their own people in the liberation war. In addition, this compensation was for government failure to fulfil its wartime promises. As one interviewee stated: "You know, government negotiating with the ZWVA was its *'ku bvuma mhosva'* (admission of guilt). *'Vari kupara mhosva* (they are paying damages) to us"²⁶

However, a corollary problem is that Africans were not the only war veterans. Coloured war veterans also successfully petitioned for government redress (*The Herald*, November 28, 1997). In addition, even though they were not included in the official definition of war veterans, there is little doubt that whites and white farmers in particular see themselves as "war veterans". They too fought for what they believed was their land. Those who survived the wars of liberation and dissidence feel that the land is their compensation and their heritage, and that is why they are committed to keeping it (*The Farmer*, August 4, 1997).



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Violent clashes between supporters of the ruling party and opposition party in the run-up to the June elections.

Another aspect of Zimbabwe's land, violence and compensation saga, which can be briefly mentioned, is Zimbabwe's involvement in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In June 1998, the Zimbabwean government sent the first units of what would eventually total 11 000 troops into the DRC. The DRC operation had an indirect link with the land issue; squatter representatives, owners of designated farms, some opposition parties and international organisations have claimed that the funds that the Zimbabwean government is spending on the DRC conflict is money that was originally earmarked for poverty alleviation and resolving the land problem (*The Independent*, 1999). War veterans themselves have generally remained mute or been moderately supportive of government on this issue. They have, after all already received compensation; many are also serving or retired members of the ZNA, and their loyalty to the state is paramount.

There has been a more worrying development in recent months. In early March 2000, "war veterans" occupied white-owned farms throughout Mashonaland. Unlike the "walk-on" peasant farm invasions of 1997, which were ended with relative ease after negotiations between the invaders, farm owners and police, the latest "move-in" invasions have been much harder to ameliorate.

Militancy and Neo-Settlerism

The main reason for the increasingly desperate agrarian situation lies in Zimbabwe's economic decline, which began with the drought of 1990 – 1993 and was accelerated by the huge war veterans disbursements and the currency crash of September/October 1997. As the economy has worsened, the government's *language, actions* and *postures* have become increasingly militant and defensive.

Increasing international isolation and internal urban criticism have pushed the government to seek malleable political partners and supporters. The two primary constituents favoured for this role are war veterans and peasants. The war veterans already "owe the government a favour" because of the payouts, but the government is also dangling another carrot and stick before them: the promise of increasing war veterans' monthly pensions, together with the threat that if an opposition government comes to power, the war veterans could lose this largesse. The peasants, meanwhile, have been promised white land in exchange for their vote in the June 2000 elections; and they have also been warned that a new government would ignore their needs).

The current cynical policy of racial scapegoating, of blaming a particular racial group (in this case, the white farmers) for national problems has its roots in both the



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**The current cynical
policy of racial
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national problems
has its roots
in the liberation
movements and
settlerism itself**



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A farmer, injured in the farm violence, recovers in a hospital.

resistance methodology of the liberation movements (1960 – 1980) and also in the history of colonialism and settlerism itself. During the Second Chimurenga, the levels of violence and the politically charged climate did not encourage internal or external scrutiny of the realities behind the rhetorical claims made on all sides. The prevailing attitude of all involved parties was that “those who are not for us, are against us”. Militancy rather than compromise was the norm. In some ways, the current government seems to have retreated into its liberation movement laager even as it has retained the suppressive apparatus of the Rhodesian settler state. The abuses of the Emergency Powers Act continue; there is an independent Judiciary but its edicts are often ignored (for instance, the High Court order instructing ex-combants to vacate commercial farms has been challenged by both the government and the Attorney-General (*Zimbabwe*

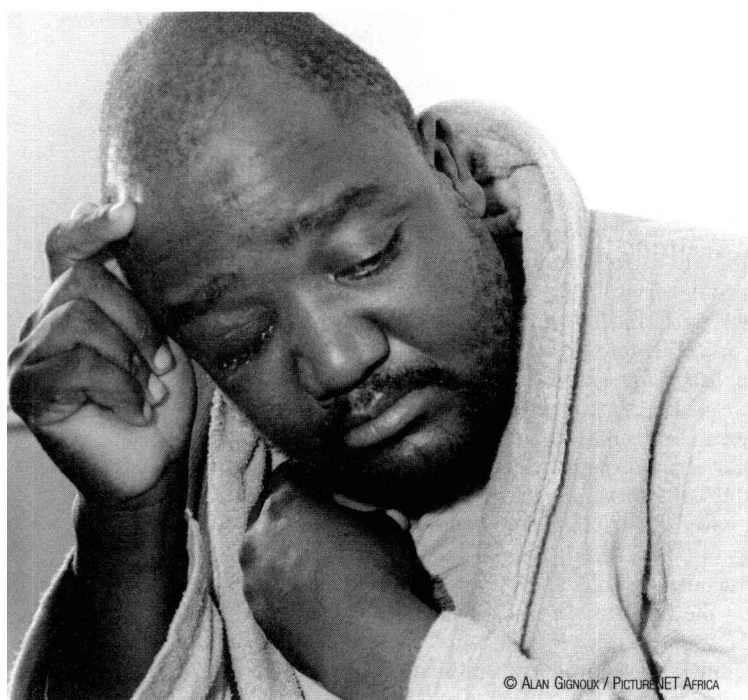
Independent, March 24, 2000)); the tendency of government to ignore criticism and negotiate only with politically useful groups; the placing of the ruling party’s political survival above national economic survival; all these are familiar from the days of the Rhodesian Front regime. This tradition of partisan power politics has been established for over a century and is likely to continue at the expense of national economic development, whatever government comes to power. (Some of the “war veterans” involved in the latest farm invasions are in fact urban ZANU-PF party supporters who are being sponsored by the government (*Zimbabwe Independent*, March 17, 2000)). Tensions have been further heightened by the fact that some farm-workers and owners have armed themselves to fight the invaders. In mid-April 2000, two white farmers were shot dead by “war veterans” when they attempted to forcibly remove invaders from their properties.

Opposite: War veterans put up a new sign at the entrance to a commercial farm.



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Death and grief in the wake of land violence — funeral of Martin Olds (18 April 2000), a farmer killed during the conflict with farm invaders.



© ALAN GIGNOUX / PICTURENET AFRICA

A beaten up farm worker recovers in hospital.



© ALAN GIGNOUX / PICTURENET AFRICA

Property damage during the farm invasions.

CONCLUSION

This paper does not pretend to be a definitive treatise on either Zimbabwe's land problem or the issue of war veterans. Rather, it has attempted to indicate certain dysfunctional patterns in Zimbabwe's agro-economic and environmental history. I have also tried to show that it was no coincidence that the land and war veterans' crises erupted simultaneously. Both are rooted in the same traumas, deprivations and the need for compensation.

From a historical perspective, there is little doubt that most of Zimbabwe's land problems are rooted in the racial land allocation policy of the early colonial government. This policy was superficially egalitarian and rational; that is, the white settlers and Africans were ostensibly to have roughly the same amount of land overall. In reality, however, these policies were not only racially skewed, but also impractical. Little consideration was given to demography, population movements, climate and soils (except that the settlers took the best land). The colonial state, which was extremely keen not to alienate its rural settler constituency, felt obliged to provide them with what they wanted; large tracts of land in the best climatic and soil zones in the country. Settlers were also given a relatively free hand with respect to land allocation, and ranchers had no official restraints on the size of their livestock herds. The result was an increasing white population that acquired more and more land and livestock, either through immigration or inheritance. The same human and livestock demographic pressures operated in the lands allocated to Africans, but these were magnified by the restraints imposed by the state in land allocation/utilisation, and by the break-down of socio-cultural norms stemming from these agrarian dysfunctions. These disparities set the scene for the current land conflicts among Africans, and between Africans and white farmers.

The failure to devise a successful land allocation policy during the colonial period also compromised land utilisation. Africans were crowded into reserves, only to be gradually squeezed out of direct competition with white farmers in the grain economy during the 1920s and 1930s. Their traditional methods of land utilisation and animal husbandry were then labelled as primitive and destructive. The state attempted to forcibly implement "correct" (western) agro-ecological measures, which resulted in a pattern of passive resistance until the 1960s, followed by increasingly overt and violent resistance. The conflicting dynamics between the settler state and the peasant communities were deeper than the land issue; the real issue was racism, the struggle for political power, and the desire to end disruptive state interventionism in land allocation and usage.

The environmental debate was a corollary to the wider conflict. It provided the colonial state with a useful mythological and methodological tool with which to characterise Africans — rural Africans in particular — as violent, destructive people who had no clear concept of the consequences of their actions. The "apocalypse" thesis was used to justify massive state intervention, and when Africans resisted agro-ecological protection measures, this merely seemed to confirm the original assumptions. For the peasants, however, the issue had always been one of survival. It appeared to them that each new land Act was designed to narrow their options and make daily survival even harder.

Thus, they resisted in whatever ways they could. Ironically, the destructionist thesis became self-fulfilling: Africans were characterised as violent and destructive in agro-ecology, and at times they were exactly that. The war era "madiro" culture further institutionalised resistance to state land control.

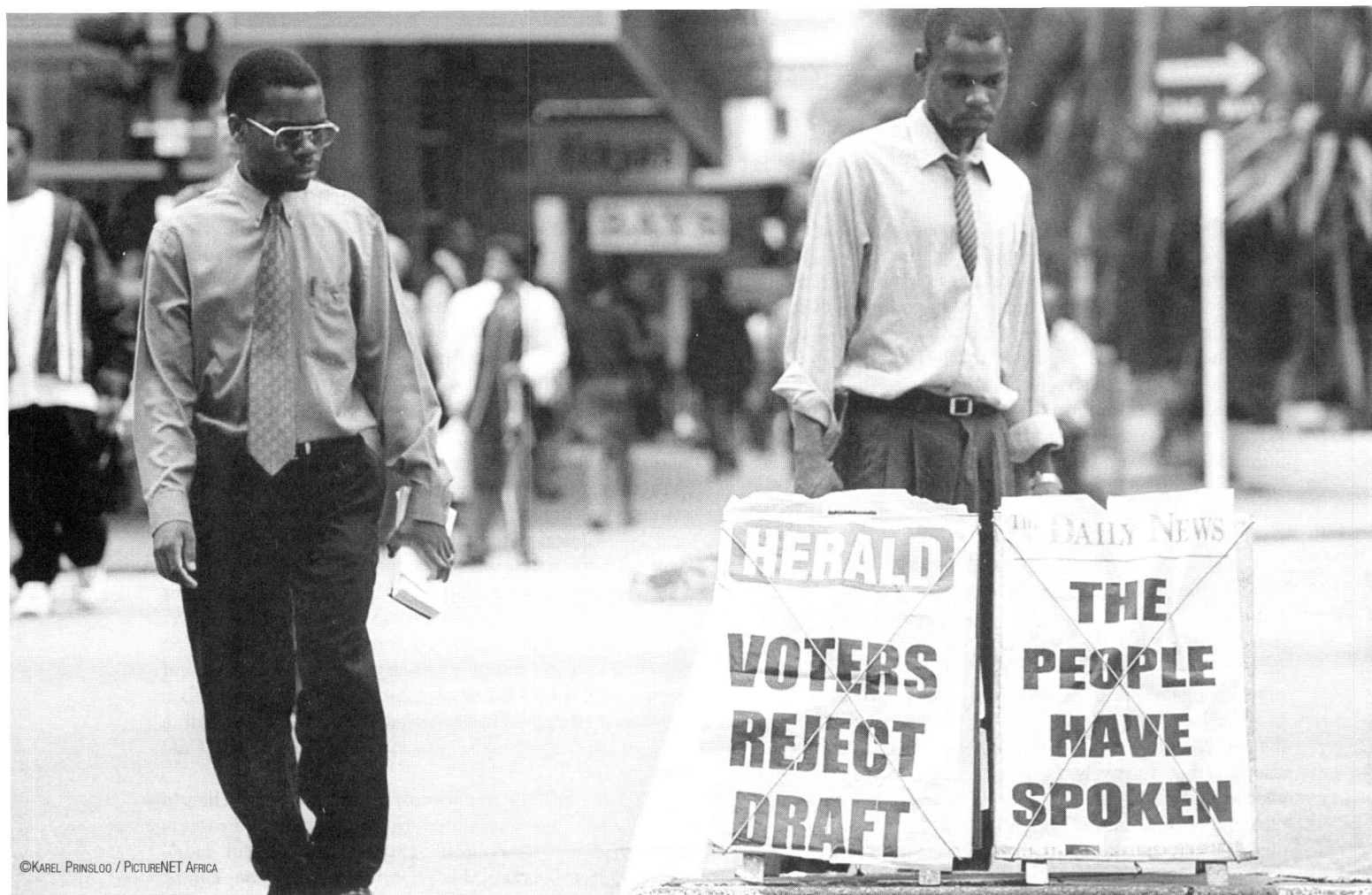
The war of liberation radicalised the peasants. The simultaneous breakdown of settler state and traditional controls, and the sustained/arbitrary use of violence traumatised and radicalised the peasants. After the war, demilitarisation took place, and some members of the warring armies were successfully integrated into a new national army. The remaining ex-combatants were demobilised and returned to civilian life. However, the statistics on rural crime and violence suggest that attitudinal and behavioural demilitarisation lagged behind weapons demilitarisation.

From interviews I conducted in Bindura, it seems there is clear consensus among peasants in the CAs and RAs over the issue of silent violence. All expressed the view that woodland preservation is necessary and that it is bad to cut trees, but most of them also stated that tree-cutting is a survivalist strategy. The tacit view is that the axe is both a tool of survival and a protest weapon against state intervention.

The same attitude applies to farming methods. The old controversy over contour ridges remains. Peasants acknowledge that contour ridging is a useful land-conservation measure, but claim that it is too labour intensive and that they will not use it because it is imposed. There is also frustration over the government's approach to the land problem. Many farmers cannot understand why the government simply does not take land from the commercial farmers. Some of those interviewed believe that the government should use the police and the army to forcibly evict white farmers. Others predict that eventually they (the peasants) will forcibly retake the land from the whites. They have a clear sense that taking the commercial farmers' land is compensation not only for the loss of life and property in the second Chimurenga, but also for the first Chimurenga.

It must, however, be pointed out that solving the land problem is not simply a matter of taking commercial farms and redistributing them among the landless. The peasants and rural squatters are not a monolithic, homogenous group. They comprise different hierarchies of class and tribes. Population and migratory pressures have led to increased internal tensions among the various groups over the question of land rights and security of tenure. Zimbabwe's land crisis cannot have a purely racial solution — to do so would be to perpetuate the colonial mistake.

Whilst conceding that Zimbabwe faces a crisis of "silent" (agro-environmental) violence, I believe that the Zimbabwean government managed mostly to neutralise the threat of "loud" violence from 1980 to 1998. This claim in no way negates the brutalities of the dissident war in Matebeleland (1981 – 1987); but even that war was not as unequivocally violent as the war of liberation and it never threatened to become a civil war. The success of Op Merger (merging ZANLA, ZIPRA and the RSF to create the ZNA) also ended the threat of civil war. The ex-combatants were successfully demobilised (1980 – 1983), although their re-integration into society has been fraught with difficulties. For instance, it was not until fairly recently that the



February 16, 2000 *Herald* headlines announce the Zimbabwe government's defeat in the Referendum.



A rally by the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in Chitungizwa, 25 km south of Harare (30 April 2000).



Morgan Tsvangirai, leader of Zimbabwe's opposition party, the MDC.

government officially recognised the trauma they suffered during the war; other war veterans were disheartened by the problems they faced in trying to establish rural co-operatives.

During the 1990s, the government has successfully neutralised its most serious political threat, the problems posed by war veterans, through a mixture of negotiation, compensation, delegitimisation and coercion. The state has passed a number of war veterans Acts and continues to negotiate with war veterans. Billions of dollars have been paid to war veterans through the War Victims Compensation Act and the War Veterans Compensation Act (1993 – 1998). The creation of the Chidyausiku Commission (August 1998) to investigate financial irregularities in the war veterans' hierarchy has also undermined this group's credibility and "stand-alone" prowess in society at large. These tactics, together with the factionalism produced within the war veterans' movement can be seen as successful measures by the government to neutralise an internal threat. Government has reduced the war veterans from a potentially powerful political alternative to the ruling party (as they threatened to be in 1997) to a recognised but politically co-opted special interest group with no more political rights than other groups.

Until 1999, the government had used various methods to demilitarise the land issue; "designating" (mainly white-owned commercial farms; calling for "designation without compensation" to be entrenched in the new draft Constitution as a way of legitimising both the state and its methods through a process of national consensus-building. Scapegoating white commercial farmers and blaming the international community continued this process. These methods did in fact reduce national threats of "loud" violence. However, they have not solved the problem of "silent" violence.

In addition, over the past year, the state has remilitarised the land issue. Linguistically, the president has threatened to "go back to the trenches" if the white farmers resist (*The Daily News*, April 3, 2000). "War veterans" armed with axes,

spears and knives have threatened farm-owners, farm-workers, and even the police, and some farmers have actually been assaulted and killed (*The Daily News*, April 9, 2000). The increasing and deliberate delegitimisation of the police by the state is a major part of the remilitarisation of the land issue.

Interestingly, the state's most recent attempt to use the land issue as a legitimisation technique floundered; in the run-up to the national Referendum on the Draft Constitution, the state cited designation and land

resettlement as a major reason why citizens should approve the Draft Constitution. But the referendum (held on February 12 – 13, 2000) was instead more of a national "stock-taking" of twenty years of ZANU-PF rule, than an assessment of proposed changes on the land issue. The land issue, although clearly important, was subsumed in the referendum by the issue of governance, and it was this that resulted in a "no" vote (albeit by a

narrow margin of 110 000 votes). As the countdown to national parliamentary elections in June 2000 begins, there is a very real risk of a catastrophic upsurge of "loud", racially-based rural violence, together with continuing silent violence. Decades of misapplied and cynical political state interventions in agrarian socio-economics are now being replaced by grassroots and often anarchic land solutions. It remains to be seen whether any of these solutions are sustainable.

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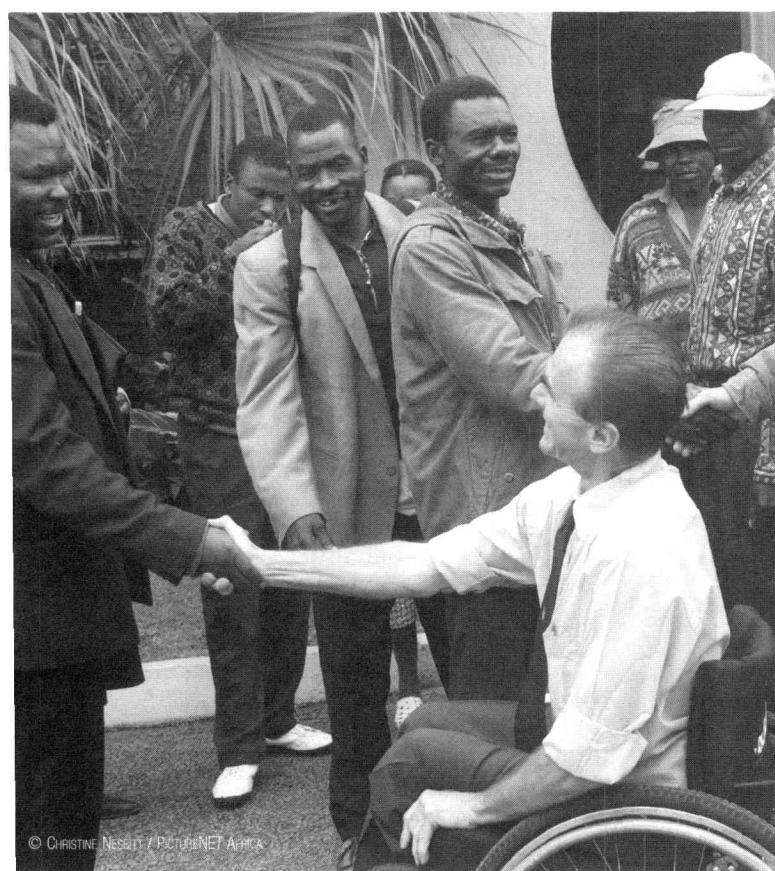
ENDNOTES

1. Moyo, J. 1995. *The Land Question in Zimbabwe*. Harare: Sapes.
2. Historically, politics has heavily influenced agrarian decision- and opinion-makers, thus clouding the issues. See Leach, M. and R. Means, eds, 1996. *The Lie of the Land: Challenging Received Wisdom of the African Environment*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press)
3. I have adapted this term from Watts, M. (1985) *Silent Violence: Food Famine, and Peasantry*. (Berkeley: University of California Press) She uses "silent violence" to refer to the destruction of the Nigerian forests and ecological network.
4. This paper uses a variegated research methodology, including

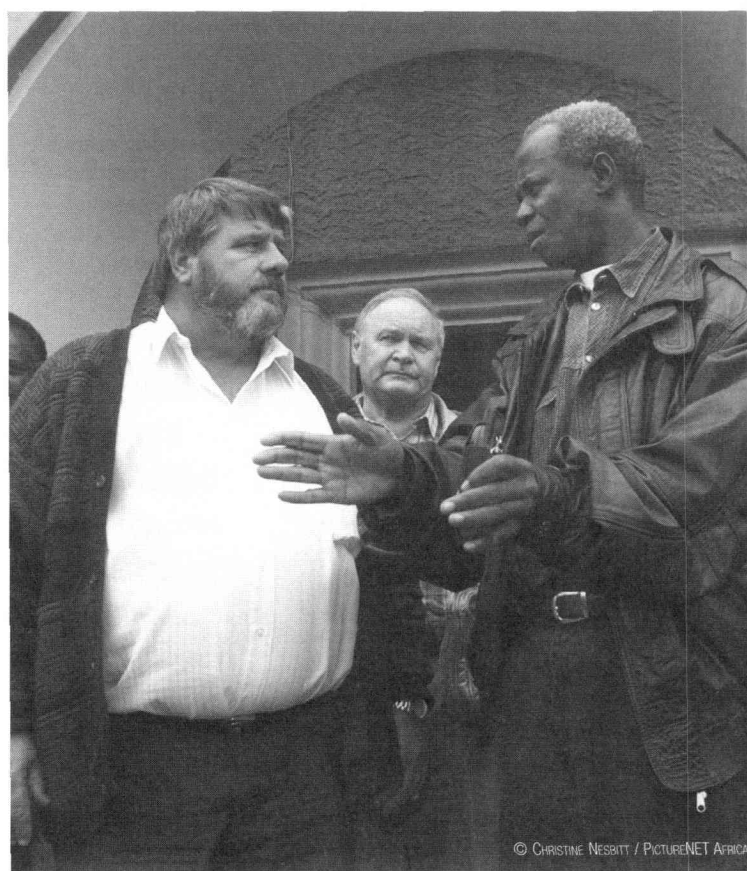
primary and secondary published and unpublished works.

The author also conducted oral interviews with African and white farmers, peasants and officials in Bindura district.

5. The company was somewhat erratic in enforcing this "quit rent"
6. Dr L. S. Jameson provided each military or civilian white settler with 1 500 hectares under the terms of this agreement.
7. After the Ndebele Defeat in 1893, King Lobengula fled to the royal capital GuBulawayo and died in exile.
8. The tribute system was common in Southern Africa at this time, but it did have an established hierarchy of rewards and punishment. The hut tax, on the other hand, seemed to the Shona and Ndebele to be both arbitrary and punitive, with no tangible rewards.



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Efforts to restore peace in Zimbabwe

Top Left: Members of the Commercial Farmers Union meet with war veterans, 9 May 2000.

Top Right: Nick Swanepoel, former president of the Commercial Farmers Union and Chengeraai Hunzvi at the meeting.

Left: President Thabo Mbeki has been encouraging Zimbabwe to find a non-violent solution to its land crisis since 1998.

9. H.E. Alvord was appointed Agriculturist for Instruction of Natives in 1926. He worked with the Department of Native Agriculture and Land Development and was Rhodesia's most influential agro-environmentalist.
10. Allied to the ticket system was the pass system to control movement of Africans in rural areas and between towns and rural areas.
11. Benjamin Burombo was a Bulawayo-based spokesperson and agitator mainly for workers (but also for peasants rights). He was arguably the most prominent pre-1960's Zimbabwean nationalist.
12. A nationalist would later call the NHLA "the best recruiter we ever had."
13. J.O.C. Annual Report (1979) estimated that between January 1976 and January 1979 some 6 200 white farmers abandoned their farms.
14. The standard dip fee was Z\$10 per beast per annum.
15. The previous minimum sentence for stock theft had been two years imprisonment.
16. This clause and the future composition of the security forces were the two most controversial issues at the conference.
17. The RF was anxious to prevent the nationalisation of private property.
18. In 1981, the then Minister of Home Affairs, Edgar Tekere, was accused of organising the murder of a white farmer. In the controversial court case which ensued, Tekere was acquitted, but was dismissed from government.
19. Between 1981 – 1987, an estimated 37 white farmers or family members were killed, and another 68 injured in rural violence in Zimbabwe.
20. The link between domestic/social violence and rural poverty and over-crowding has been surprisingly under-researched.
21. From 1990 – 1999, basic food prices rose by 300 per cent.
22. Land designation, both as law and process, was not invented by the ZANU-PF government. The Rhodesian government also designated abandoned or under-utilised white farms during the second Chimurenga.
23. It has precipitated a strong exchange of views between Zimbabwe, the United Kingdom, the World Bank and the IMF.
24. The Agric-Alert system allowed farmers in hostile areas to use mobile walkie-talkies to communicate with each other and the RSF.
25. Zimbabwe has 2 281 white-owned farms listed. It is estimated that each commercial farm family owns at least one firearm (*The Farmer* July 27, 1998).
26. Interview with T. Chaza (ex-ZANLA fighter and current member of the ZWVA), Harare, January 9, 1999.

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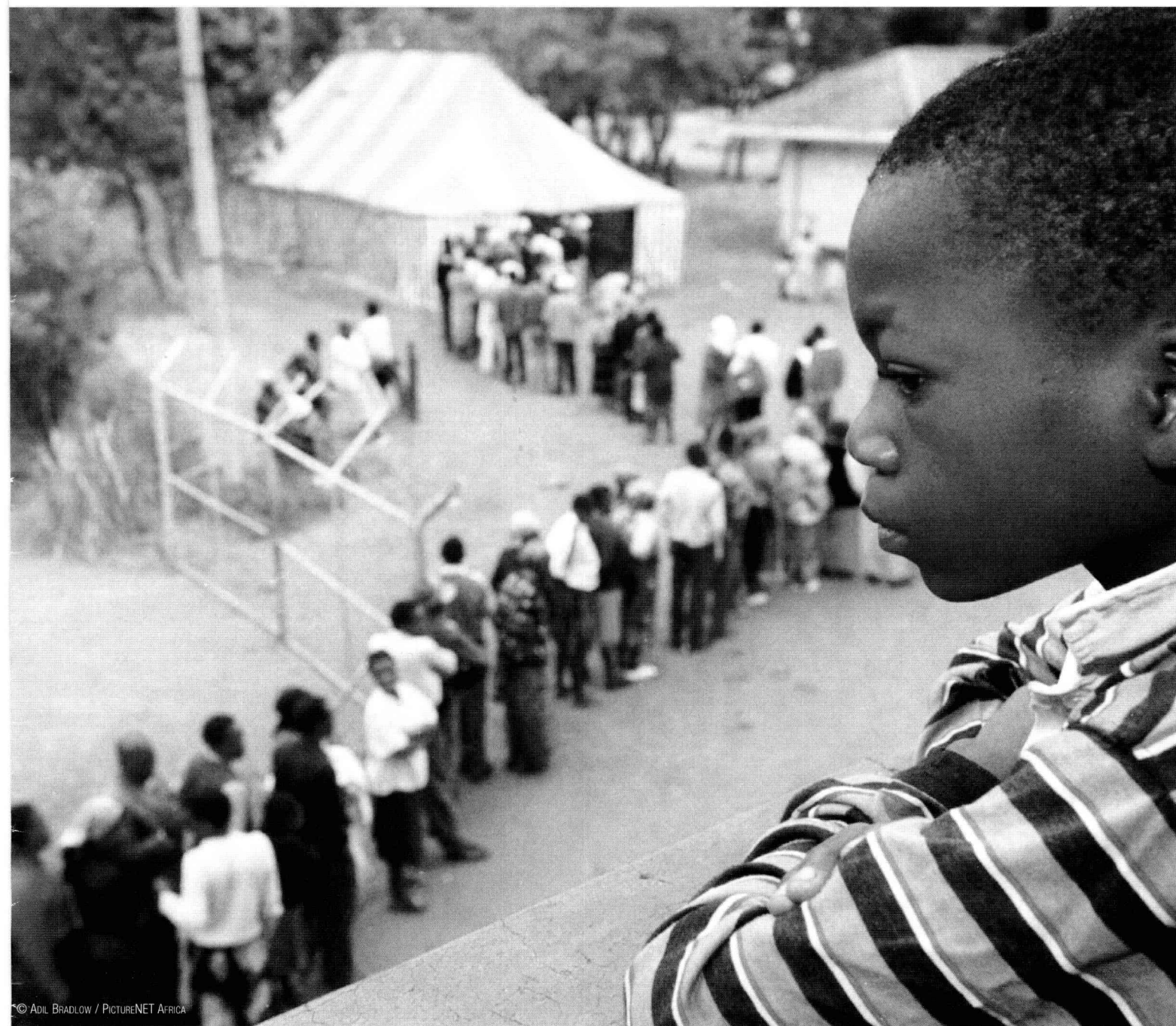
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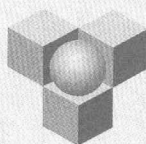
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A young boy watches the 1995 national elections



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